



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EEO (DM&EEO)

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3

MARCH/APRIL 2002

Q&A

More on Diversity From Secretary Anthony J. Principi

Secretary Principi continues his vision of workplace diversity in this issue's Q&A.

Q: What's the state of diversity at VA?

VA is relatively diverse. Compared to the 16 other cabinet-level departments, we rate second in the representation of people with disabilities at 9.2% of our workforce. According to OPM, we have the third largest percentage of African Americans (27%) and disabled veterans (6.8%). We rank fifth in Asian Americans (4.2%) and women (51.9%), sixth in veterans (28.1%) and Hispanics (6.3%), and ninth in Native American (0.9%) representation. But the Department faces major staffing challenges and has much to do to ensure that it mirrors the diversity of the people we serve--America's veterans.

For instance, Hispanics at VA are underrepresented in overall number, specific occupations, leadership pipeline,



and the SES. Blacks are well represented in number but underrepresented in specific occupations, leadership pipeline, and the SES as well. Attrition and the growing number of

retirement-eligibles should present prime opportunities during the next few years to broaden our recruitment and promotion pools.

Q: How's VA dealing with these staffing issues?

We're tackling the problem through training and education, but also through a new effort--succession planning--of which diversity

is a key element. Workforce planning is at the heart of building sustainable excellence into everything we do at VA. We cannot just fill empty job positions; we must recruit, hire, and retain with diversity and new competencies in mind. That's smart business, and we're developing the tools to make it happen.■

In this issue:

FIELD NOTES News You Can Use	2
SPOTLIGHT White House Executive Order Updates	2
INSIDE STORY How To Plan a Special Observance Event	3
SPECIAL EMPHASIS Phoenix VAMC Mentoring Program	3
DM&EEO ONLINE	4
CALENDAR	4

CELEBRATE!

National Women's History Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating National Women's History Month in March. This year's theme is "Women Sustaining the American Spirit."

This observance grew from an effort to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women in American history. In 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County, California, Commission on the Status of Women initiated

Women's History Week. In 1987, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the celebration Nationwide to the entire month of March.

For more information, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo/whm, or contact VA's National Women's Program Manager Wanda J. Jones at (202) 273-7388.

Bookmarks

- VA Center for Women Veterans
www.va.gov/womenvet
- Asian Pacific American Institute/Congressional Studies www.apaics.org
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities
www.hacu.net
- Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP)
www.wrpjobs.com
- Washington Internships for Native Americans
www.american.edu/wins
- Black Heritage Series
<http://new.blackvoices.com/features/heritage>

FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use



2001 Winter Sports Clinic Participant



2002 National Summer Internship Program presenters with DM&EEO intern Janis Price (third from right), who coordinated the event

More than 400 disabled veterans are expected to participate in the **16th Annual Winter Sports Clinic** to be held at Snowmass Village, Aspen, Colorado, during April 7-12.

The event, cosponsored by VA and the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), will be hosted by the Grand Junction, Colorado, VA Medical Center and the Rocky Mountain Network. Bo Derek, National Honorary Chairperson of VA's National Rehabilitation Special Events, will attend the event again this year to meet and honor those who "have borne the battle."

► More info: www.va.gov/vetevent/wsc/2002, or call Annie Tuttle at (909) 422-3193.

On February 26, 2002, the Office of DM&EEO held a briefing on the **2002 National Summer Internship Program** available to VA organizations. With increased participation in the program, VA will reinforce its workforce planning efforts, provide student career development opportunities, and help enhance the Department's diversity.

► More info: Call VA's National Internship Program Manager Jose Marrero at (202) 273-5839.

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The Department recently ratified partnership agreements with two organizations that will work with VA to provide more job opportunities and programs for minority students. On January 17, 2002, VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi signed an agreement with the **Interamerican College of Physicians and Surgeons (ICPS)** to recruit, train, and retain Hispanics in the VA workforce. Dr. Rene Rodriguez, ICPS president and CEO, signed the agreement on behalf of the association.

► More info: [www.icps.org](http://www.icps.org)

On February 21, the **National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)** and VA formed a partnership to provide job opportunities and educational programs for students and staff at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Dr. Frederick S. Humphries, NAFEO President, joined Secretary Principi in a signing ceremony at VA Central Office.

► More info: [www.nafeo.org](http://www.nafeo.org)

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SPOTLIGHT

White House Executive Order Updates

Here's an overview of diversity-related Executive Orders that have been updated during the past year.

Executive Order (EO) 12876, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, was revoked on February 12, 2002, and replaced with EO **13256**.

EO 12900, Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, was revoked on October 12, 2001, and replaced

with EO **13230**, "Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans Commission."

EO 13125, "Increasing Participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Federal Programs," was amended and renamed on June 6, 2001, by EO **13216**, "Increasing Opportunity and Improving Quality of Life of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders."

For More Info

To learn more about Executive Orders, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo and click on the White House Initiatives link.

INSIDE STORY

How to Plan a Special Observance Event

Special observances are important tools in understanding and accepting our diversity. And when planning them, it's important to put first things first while keeping the end in mind. According to Noemi Pizarro-Hyman, VA National Program Manager for People With Disabilities, you should ask yourself at the start: "When people leave the event, what message do I want them to take into the community?"

There are many steps involved in planning a special observance event, but several are key. Support from your committee members and the other Special Emphasis Programs is paramount, says Hyman. You should determine what logistical support you have in place and what support you still need. Another key function is preparing an estimated budget and requesting funds. These are Federal government-sanctioned programs, so monies should be made available for them. She adds, "I find a checklist to be a very helpful tool. Think of such things as programs, location, alternate location, accommodation for persons with disabilities, and so forth."

If you're thinking about inviting an outside speaker, contact him or her at least 6 to 9 months prior to the event. Sought-after speakers are constantly receiving invitations, some as far as a year-and-a-half in advance, so ensure that there's a Plan B. Many seasoned Program Managers have learned this lesson the hard way, so don't get caught with your "slip showing," says Hyman. When in doubt, seek guidance from your local EEO Manager; but you can also contact VA's National Program Managers for assistance.

Another important step is to delegate responsibilities to committee members and involve staff members. For example, if you're preparing for National Disabilities Employment Awareness Month and you'd like to educate staff about invisible disabilities, contact the Chief of Psychiatry Service to make a presentation on such disabilities as depression, schizophrenia, and manic depression.

These are several key steps involved in planning a special event. For a more detailed tool, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo/event.htm.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Phoenix VAMC Mentoring Program



Be willing and eager to talk; be willing and eager to listen. Be honest. Psyche yourself up for discussions. Look at people when you speak to them.

Pearls of wisdom from your Mom? No, they're "relationship reminders" that help guide a successful Mentoring Program at the Carl T. Hayden VAMC in Phoenix, Arizona.

Often a key element in diversity programs, mentoring can help staff improve job skills, increase employment and advancement opportunities, assist staff career development, and boost morale. EEO Program Manager Roberto Peart and Mentoring Program Coordinator Debbie Simon have been with the Phoenix program since its start in 1997. Says Simon, "It took a year to set up the Program

because we started from scratch, writing the policy, bulletin, proposal, training materials, and so forth."

Simon piloted the voluntary program for 6 months through the Federal Women's Program, then she garnered buy-in from management and AFGE. The EEO Advisory Committee now serves as operations hub for the program, matching mentors and mentees, overseeing program activities, and working closely with participants to help ensure their success.

The Phoenix Mentoring Program requires participants to devote a minimum of 1 hour per week—during regular work hours—for a minimum of 6 months. And it has been expanded throughout the VISN with the policies that Simon developed serving as guides for other facilities.

To learn more about this program, contact Ms. Simon at Debbie.Simon@med.va.gov (include "Mentoring" in the subject line).

Diversity@Work

Newsletter published bimonthly
by the Office of
Diversity Management & Equal
Employment Opportunity.
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COMING SOON

- * Celebrate Asian
American Pacific
Heritage Month
- * Put some VSSC in
your workforce
analysis
- * Make plans to attend
VA's July National
Leaders Conference,
cosponsored by
DM&EEO, ORM, and
HR
- * Plug into more news,
tips, and tools

DM&EEO ONLINE

The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workforce free of discrimination at the Department of Veterans Affairs. Here are some of our newest site additions that can help you promote workplace diversity and enhance the employment of minori-

ties, women, veterans, and people with disabilities:

- 2002 Summer Internship Guide
- Government Web Links page
- Updated glossary
- Keyword search

Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you. And drop us an e-mail to tell us how we're doing!



2002 CALENDAR

National Women's History Month
March

National Puerto Rican Coalition Annual Conference
San Juan, PR
April 3-6
(202) 223-3915
www.bateylink.org

2002 Leading Diversity Conference
Atlanta
April 8-11
www.linkageinc.com

SER Annual Conference and Job Fair
Albuquerque
April 22-24
(972) 506-7815
www.ser-national.org/Pages/conference37.htm

Looking ahead:

Asian American Pacific Heritage Month
May
www.fapac.org

National Leaders Conference
Atlanta
July 15-18
(Watch our site for more info!)

Women's Equality Day
August 26
www.nwhp.org

Blacks in Government National Conference
Atlanta
August 26-30
www.bignet.org

For other events, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.